

# REMOTE PAGER

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Ever since John Northern Hilliard published the first "telephone test" in the February 1905 issue of *The Sphinx* magazine, magicians have been developing new approaches. Certainly the most popular version is that generally known as "The Wizard."

Those who have dabbled in magic will be familiar with this, as it has been explained in countless books of magic for beginners. The effect is akin to the original Hilliard routine, although the method is different. In the classic routine, a spectator freely selects a playing card. The performer calls "The Wizard" on the telephone. (The ubiquitous presence of cellular phones makes this particularly practical these days.) "The Wizard" announces the name of the chosen card.

One reason for this version's popularity is that the coding system is quickly learned, thus making it easy to teach to a partner who may be only marginally interested in performing.

The performer takes the phone and dials the partner's number. The partner is expecting the call, the approximate time having been predetermined. As soon as the partner picks up the phone, he/she begins reciting the card values, ace through king. As the partner utters the chosen value, the performer says, "Hello?" into the receiver as if the phone had just been picked up on the other end.

The partner, now knowing the selected value, recites the four suits. The performer says, "Mr. Wizard?" as the partner states the correct suit. To the observing spectators, only initial contact has been made and no information has been exchanged. The phone is immediately handed to the participant who chose the card as "The Wizard" reveals the name of the card.

The earliest published methods applying this type of coding would seem to be Howard Savage's "The Phantom Phone" in the June 1929 *Sphinx*. That routine involved a book of poetry. Whether the playing card version precedes this application is something I have been unable to determine.

An interesting variation on "The Wizard" appeared, in all places, in the May 1985 issue of *Dell Champion Wordplay and Puzzle Fun*. The article is called "Calling Dr. Mentallo," By Ehrich S. Wise. (The similarity between the author's name and Houdini's birth name of Erich Weiss suggest that this is a pseudonym.)

In the "Marvello" test, the spectator is shown a list of sixteen words and asked to choose one. The partner is called and the chosen word revealed. The method has to do with the first and last letters of the sixteen words. The partner recites "a, b, c, d" to allow the performer to cue the initial letter, then repeats those same four letters to establish the last letter.

The idea has merit. However, the restricted nature of the spelling for the sixteen words calls attention to itself immediately.

Inspired by the Wise article, I set about creating a more subtle application. After much effort, I devised the following system. As in the "Mentallo" routine, the locations of specific letters within the words serve to cue the chosen word. However, *vowels* are the determining letters and, ask they occur in variable positions relative to each word, there is no way to discern any systematic construction.

Instead of using a word list that has no justification, this word list is presented in the form of a piece of correspondence.

The performer hands the spectator a letter which, it is claimed, comes from an unusual friend of his, Mister Zulu. The letter is shown here:

*Impossible, but true! A demonstration of intuition, custom tailored for you by Mister Zulu. Choose any word in the paragraph, of at least four letters. After you choose a word, contact me by phone. Believe it or not, I'll announce the word you are thinking of! Imagine the surprise ~ but be on guard: I presume my demonstration is going to haunt you...*

*Mister Zulu*

(At this point, the *Word Ways* reader may wish to examine the text and try to discover the unusual aspect of its composition that will enable the efficient method that will be exploited.)

The document is shown to the spectator. As stated in the letter, any word of four or more letters may be chosen from the text. The performer calls the partner, who recites the vowels upon picking up the phone: "a, e, i, o, u."

	<b>a</b>	<b>e</b>	<b>i</b>	<b>o</b>	<b>u</b>
<b>a</b>	PARAGRAPH	AFTER	TAILORED	ANNOUNCE	HAUNT
<b>e</b>	LEAST	LETTERS	BELIEVE	DEMONSTRATION	PRESUME
<b>i</b>	IMAGINE	MISTER	THINKING	IMPOSSIBLE	INTUITION
<b>o</b>	CONTACT	PHONE	GOING	CHOOSE	FOUR
<b>u</b>	GUARD	TRUE	SURPRISE	CUSTOM	ZULU

The performer says, "Hello," at the moment the partner states the first vowel found in the chosen word. The partner repeats the sequence and the performer says, "Mister Zulu?" as the second vowel of the chosen word is stated.

From this information, the partner is able to determine the correct word by consulting the chart shown above.

It remains only for "Mister Zulu" to reveal the coded word to the participating spectator, as mysteriously as possible.